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School of Design,

ON THE MEANS OF IMPROVING

PUBLIC TASTE.

BY GEORGE JACKSON.

HONORARY SECRETARY.

Printed by request of the Council.

1844.

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1844

MANCHESTER

School of Design,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS, SOMERSET
HOUSE, LONDON.

ON THE MEANS OF IMPROVING PUBLIC TASTE:

A PAPER READ AT A CONVERSAZIONE HELD AT THE ROYAL
INSTITUTION, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH, J. W. FRASER,
ESQ. IN THE CHAIR;

AND REPEATED, BY REQUEST, AT A
PUBLIC MEETING AT THE ATHENÆUM,
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH,
R. COBDEN, M.P., IN THE CHAIR.

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ON THE

IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC TASTE.

It is not my intention to enter into any of those disputable definitions—which have been given and defended—of that faculty or effort of the mind we denominate Taste, but presume it admitted, that a choice does exist in the public mind for some things or styles in preference to others; and that it is important, in a national and commercial view, that this choice should be rightly directed.

Burke says,—“ that he means by the word taste, no more than that faculty, or those faculties of the mind, which are affected with, or which form a judgment of, the works of imagination or the elegant Arts.” Dugald Stewart affirms,—“ that it is not a simple or original faculty, but a power gradually formed by experience and observation.” From these authors, it seems that taste is not an inherent faculty of the mind, but is the result of tuition. Hence it becomes important, for the general improvement of the taste of the people, that every facility should be afforded, and means adopted, for the cultivation of their judgment—seeing that the results are good or bad, according to the influences by which it is affected.

The objects by which taste may be exercised, or which call this faculty into operation, are numerous, and are both natural and artificial. I forbear saying anything of those which belong to the natural world, and limit my remarks to those which are imitative in their productions and pictorial in their effects, usually denominated "The Arts," and divided into Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. With these I propose to include the "Industrial Arts." An elegant writer on taste observes, in reference to those Arts,—“Although their first principles are derived from nature, yet they are not governed by the actual appearance of natural objects; for, as they address themselves chiefly to the imagination, it is necessary that the artist should aim at producing works which shall be free from those defects, or redundancies, or other uncongenial accompaniments, which are found, more or less, in the most beautiful scenes or objects which they take for their examples. The cause of this necessity is found in that delicate sense of propriety and that love of perfection which are so generally felt by men of cultivated minds, whose habits of research and attentive observation lead them, on the one hand, to discover whatever is imperfect, or out of order, or unnecessary to the general effect in any particular scene or object; and on the other hand, to supply from their own inventive powers whatever is wanting to ensure perfection. It thus appears that the essential beauty of any Work of Art consists, not so much in its being an exact resemblance of any natural object, as its answering to those ideas of perfect beauty which exist in the minds of those whose faculties have been improved by habits of reflection and observation.” From this description of the nature of Art, it will appear, that to enable the public to appreciate its productions, it is essential that their judgments should be cultivated, to enable them to detect beauty; and that it is only as facilities are afforded for this elevation of their mind that we can expect any improvement in their taste.

That the Arts have not been developed to the extent, or received that share of attention which scientific pursuits have done, in this country, is evident. It is an important question,—Why they should have suffered this neglect? It cannot be from want of utility that their principles have remained untaught. What rank or occupation in life is free from their influence? They are essential to every branch of the mechanical professions, and every production of manufacture, from the gigantic engine to the zephyr-like gauze. To the literary man, they add another power to his descriptive talents,—to the special, pleader they give a demonstrating means of argument,—to the merchant, they save time, and become an effective means of correspondence,—to the independent man, they are a never-failing source of rational amusement,—and to the operative, in almost every occupation of life, they offer the means of making himself more useful, and consequently more valuable.

Those who are acquainted with the history of Art, will readily ascribe its present state to the true cause. It is evident that at one time this country, in some departments,—especially that of Architecture,—stood eminent; and whether we ascribe the origin of the Gothic style to ourselves or to others, in no other country was it carried to greater perfection. The splendid remains that grace our land in various parts, are monuments not only of the skill of the designers of those days, but also prove that there was no lack of talent amongst the executors themselves, shewing that great perfection must have existed in every department of Decorative Art.

In later times, the pursuits of the people seem to have been of a more sordid character, and their attention solely directed to perfecting those sciences that ensure rapidity of production, without regard to grace or elegance. So far has this system been carried, that we have become the envy of every civilized nation; whilst there is scarcely a petty continental state that does not regard our pretensions to Art with an eye of derision,

if not contempt. The elements of Art form no part of the education of our youth, and our walks and occupations in after life are void of any examples which would influence or mature our judgment. Neglected by the Government,—disregarded by the Church,—and unseen by the people,—the surprise is, not that we do not achieve excellence in its pursuit, but that we should have preserved amongst us any relish for its productions. But, despite of this untoward state of things, we have had men who have stood forward as brilliant exceptions,—a Reynolds in painting, Flaxman in sculpture, Wedgwood in pottery, and others whose efforts have kept the spark from total extinction.

The false notions that exist in the public mind, as to what constitutes or may be considered as Art, may be assigned as one cause of its present state. What a powerful distinction exists, in their estimation, between a carver in wood and a sculptor of marble! The former may produce the most splendid effects of form and grouping; but what share of the public applause does his skill obtain, compared with an inferior production in marble? The one is considered as a mere mechanic in Art,—the other is looked up to as the professional esquire. It is important that the public taste should be so instructed as to banish these false distinctions,—that they should be taught to look at a work, judge of its merits, and award their approbation, without regard to the nature of the material. This can only be effected by convincing the public, by examples, that there are difficulties to overcome, and talent required in the practice of any department, however inferior its application may at first sight appear; and that perfection can only be attained by persevering industry and constant study. May not the present state of the useful Arts be traced to the fact, that a young man entering upon this practice, ambitious and desirous of fame, soon discovers that no praise, no *eclat*, is awarded to their productions; and to obtain this he must bend his mind to the ideal? May we not also trace to this

want of discriminating judgment, the complaint that is made by the professors of high Art,—of the want of patronage for their efforts? It is not likely, or to be anticipated, that the public,—whose estimation is regulated by comparison,—if they cannot appreciate beauty in the things of necessity and common use, can have a mind sufficiently alive to the beautiful in those creations of fancy which are beautiful only to the educated eye. Extensive patronage must not be anticipated for the ideal of Art, until the useful is more generally appreciated. The industrial Arts must be made the means not only of educating the public taste, but of teaching the elements of Art to those who would soar to its highest end. How could such a course depreciate the practice of high Art, or render its professors less competent to produce great works? Being made acquainted with its more extended application and utility, would not fail to increase their ardour and expand their influence.

It is on but few that Nature bestows her choicest gifts! and our endeavour should be to search out and cultivate, by every means and to the fulness of extent, talent, wherever it is displayed. Should we not gain credit as a nation, if we could bring forth another Michael Angelo, or a Raffaele? Can we not trace in the productions of those names the course we ought to pursue? Was not the knowledge of Art manifested by them, and applied to so many branches of production, precisely the knowledge we ought to endeavour to convey? This would soon produce powerful effects;—the useful Arts would attain a degree of excellence that would render us eminent as a nation, and high Art would be relieved from those attempts to reach it, which, by their multiplicity and inferiority, now depreciate it in public estimation.

To work out this change of feeling in the public mind, it will be necessary to make them more intimately acquainted with the past history and present state of Art;—to shew them that the Arts have had their eras marked by distinct modes of

treatment and style,—that so distinctive have these modes been, that the antiquarian is enabled to trace in them the taste and intelligence displayed by their different ages;—to convince them that these varied effects are the result, not of chance, but from the application of certain and definite principles, which are as infallible as any of those which regulate the mechanical or other sciences;—to shew them that this variety of style exists in every department of Art,—that the productions of the Egyptians, in contrast with the Greeks, even in their attempts to delineate the human figure, are as marked as in the architectural productions,—that the models of the latter, which we now regard as standards of perfection, are the result of a combination of parts, and not the images of any distinct race of mankind that have existed,—that whatever credence we may give to the historical supposition, that the one nation derived its knowledge of Art from the other, the leading features are so widely different, that it would be impossible to delineate the peculiarities of one from the most profound knowledge of the principles of the other,—that in the Industrial Arts, the want of knowledge of distinct styles is severely felt, and that the absence of this discriminating power is the cause of the incongruities and mixtures we daily witness;—to prove to them, that the practice of the minor Arts still holds out inducements, alike honourable and remunerative; and that full scope yet remains for the exercise of genius and the acquirement of fame.

That this effect should be produced on the public mind, is important, not only as it regards the welfare and onward progress of Art, but to national and individual prosperity; especially at the present time, when other nations are seeking to add our mechanical skill to their knowledge of Art, thus rendering themselves more dangerous competitors in distant markets. The essential difference between the mechanical sciences and the artistic, is a powerful argument why we should cultivate the latter to a greater extent than we do. In

the former, what has been achieved by one man in any country, has been accomplished for the world ; whereas the productions of Art are individual, and the perfection attained is and can only be a standard for the emulation of others to aim at. Multiplicity of its productions can only be accomplished by a constant recurrence to and study of those elements that have been the tutors of past ages. Its productions are mental, and can only result from a right use of those principles which have been developed by past experience, and their application to the natural objects around us. In Art, it is only one original that commands admiration,—plagiarism is easily detected. The effect of one great Work of Art is more important than any mechanical production, inasmuch as it raises the standard of comparison, begets a desire for excellence in the mind, and stimulates to its attainment. Mechanical productions may be multiplied *ad libitum*: all equally beautiful, though produced by different machines, they are easily to be conveyed and copied in other lands. Not so the genius of Art!—it is not transportable ; but if rightly developed, it becomes a national property and a national honour !

The effect produced on the mind by works of Art is progressive. The eye does not always detect beauty, or discover principles, at first glance ; they require to be studied and compared with other standards. It is by contrast we discover beauty. The mind may derive considerable pleasure from the contemplation of that which is new and wonderful ; but it is only after the effect of novelty has worn off that it comes to that state of feeling which enables it to cull the lesson. An example of this is furnished by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who tells us—“ When he first saw the works of Raffaele at Rome, he did not discover any remarkable beauty in them ; on the contrary, they disappointed his expectations. But after he had repeatedly viewed and carefully studied them, he duly appreciated their value, and considered that they were

fully entitled to the high enconiums bestowed upon them." If such the effect of these great works on a mind so alive to the beauties of Art,—if he was slow to understand and discover principles, how much more essential is it that the mass of the people should at all times have access to such examples, that their eye may be educated and their judgment matured to enable them to detect beauty and appreciate merit.

The application of the principles of Art to the productions of the mechanical sciences, increases their value without increasing the consumption of the raw material. In proof of this, little need be said; almost any of the common articles of consumption attest this fact, and shew their vast importance as a means of increasing the national wealth.

It is not by examples of ancient Art alone that the people ought to be taught. In modern times, science has developed means of execution, and introduced materials unknown in their ages. The Arts ought not only to avail themselves of these aids, but endeavour to assimilate their practice to the increased facilities afforded,—to take advantage of the finer fabric, and follow the chemist in his addition to our stock of tints and colours,—to lend their powerful aid to give grace and elegance. Thus, no sooner has science developed a new principle of action, than its requirements should be made known, and Art step in—seize the thought, and add its beauty to it. This may be accomplished by exhibiting specimens of manufacture and the Industrial Arts, both foreign and domestic. These would be useful instructors. At the present time, how many valuable suggestions are lost, or remain, if not unknown, confined to a limited circle, and the general commerce of the country but little benefited by them; whereas, if exposed to the public eye, their principles would become known and extended to other than their immediate object. In reference to this subject, in two essays read at the Mechanics' Institution in the year 1837, I used the following language; and, as it is still applicable to the condition of the

people, and bears upon this question, I beg to quote it here:—
 “ Here would be collected the works, not of the ancients, but of the present day; not of the things of luxury alone, but of every one’s necessity. Here should be things pure in design, excellent in execution, or beautiful in form and construction. These would be the pictures they would admire!—these the works of Art they would study! They would find themselves bound, as by a spell, to visit it, because it would present to their view things their judgment comprehended. Here they find themselves, by an invisible impetus, urged forward, and their ambition called into exercise; and seeing their want of knowledge, would engender a desire to increase it. Then the love of Art would soon be fanned into a flame, which would not rest till it had found material to feed upon.”

If these imperfect remarks have portrayed the nature and state of Art, it must be evident that we have hitherto possessed no means of imparting general knowledge of its principles amongst the people at large. It is a pleasing task to turn to the prospects of the present time, which augur well for the future. At no time in the history of our country has there been more encouragement to hope that Art would, ere long, receive its due share of public attention. The conduct of the Government, in reference to the decorations for the Houses of Parliament, has been everything that could be desired by the most ardent lover of Art. The extraordinary results of the *first* appeal to the talent of the country manifested the truth, that we have the power, if there is the prospect of reward. In the attempt to develop the resources of the useful Arts, the same cheering results were not realized, and the defective system of the schools became evident; and whatever may have been the perfection displayed in the mechanical, the artistic effect was not realized; thus evidencing, in a powerful manner, that correct knowledge of the principles of Art were not general amongst the people, and that the producers of the useful were deficient in their application and

practice,—degrading our productions in the eyes of other nations, and tending to foster that spirit of patronage for foreign productions at home which has so much depressed the practice of the Industrial Arts in this country. The day is not far distant, we may hope, when this defect will be removed, and that a spirit will arouse itself amongst the people that will throw off this disgrace from the national character, and elevate it to that same high standard its commerce has attained, and has a right to expect the assistance of Art to maintain.

That there is a desire on the part of the Government, at the present time, to foster and encourage a spirit for improvement in the useful Arts, is evidenced by the support they are affording to Schools of Design in various parts of the country; and no doubt can be entertained, that these institutions will be the means of effecting much good,—more especially as experience develops their necessities, and the system on which they are based is made to assimilate itself more to the nature of the productions they are intended to improve. Yet, a defect remains: the influence of these Schools is limited; the nature of the instruction,—the time required,—preclude them from becoming general instructors of the people. It will *ever* be impossible to induce all to become elementary students; it is not necessary that all should become expert practitioners. Many persons are competent to criticise general effects and appreciate works of Art who have no knowledge of detail. It is those means that would *insensibly* educate the eye to the perception of beauty, that we stand in need of, and the necessity for which I am anxious to impress upon your consideration; and, if possible, induce a spirit of activity that will avail itself, not only of that noble desire for the promotion of good that is now so active in the town, but also of the desire I have alluded to, on the part of the Government, to promote such institutions. That there is talent amongst us as a people, cannot for a moment be doubted. The important question is,—How can

this talent be developed and best directed? Certainly, no means are likely to be so effective, as opening to the view and constant study of the people, examples of Art,—the relics of other ages,—in contrast with productions of the present time. I think the day is not far distant when the Government will find it necessary to multiply *fac similes* of those splendid remains of ancient Art which are in their possession, in the British Museum and in London, (the influence of which is now confined to that locality, and of use only to a fraction of the community,) and deposit them in the leading provincial towns; thus forming centres in various parts of the kingdom where these essential helps to study may be seen, and the principles of Art learned. Who can calculate the effect such facilities would have upon Art, or the results, in a national point of view? What facilities have we in this town? Out of the Metropolis, where are the examples—where the stores of Art? What means have we of elevating public taste? Our thoroughfares present no beauty,—no statues—no fountains, and but little that is good in architecture. There is nothing to excite emulation!—nothing to arouse a feeling for, or perception of, excellence in the mind!

Allow me to contrast this state of things with that which exists amongst our rivals abroad. With them, Art is made a leading feature not only of every system of instruction, but its examples are continually exposed to the public eye. Every public object is graced by its performance, and all events commemorated by its efforts;—the most common-place necessity is made subservient to its influence. Who, that has wandered through the streets of Paris, has not been struck with the thought, that if the supply of water is not conveyed with as much facility as to our dwellings, it is turned into a powerful means of educating the eye; and instead of the common-place machines used in this country, with levers of graceless form, requiring much animal strength to put into motion, has there seen that the vessel cannot be filled with this

necessary condiment until it has educated the eye and taste of the recipient,—that the water has been thrown high into the air, and descended from basin to basin until it reached the grand reservoir from which it issues, through some ideal or chimerical form. What must be the effect upon the juvenile minds of the lower classes, who are sent, as soon as nature has imparted strength, to these fountains of combined necessity and beauty? This is a simple illustration of the way the things of necessity are made subservient to and become the means of public instruction. I shall not delay you to go through their public streets, walks, and gardens, where Art is made a conspicuous and leading feature, always exposed to observation, and cannot be passed unobserved. There is also their museums and palaces, which are open and free of access to the people, and are places of constant and general resort, particularly on feast days and holidays.

But to come near home: let us contrast the state of this district with the metropolis, and then say if there is no need for alteration,—no claim for activity. In the metropolis, numerous museums and galleries are open to the inhabitants; and as some amongst my audience may not be acquainted with the facilities that exist there, I take the liberty of enumerating those that are free:—The British Museum, National Gallery, St. Paul's Cathedral, East India House Museum, Soane Museum, Society of Arts, Mr. Saul's Geological Museum, and, at a small charge, the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey. Near London, which form objects for a delightful day's recreation,—Hampton Court Palace, Kew Gardens, Woolwich Model and Rocket Rooms, Dulwich Gallery: these free. There are others that are devoted to Art and Science, at which an admission fee is required,—generally one shilling,—which are far too numerous for enumeration here. Surely, if these find admirers and frequenters in the metropolis, they would do so here; but I shall not enlarge, as

I hope this will be sufficient to place our condition in that light which it is my wish to bring your attention to.

In a correspondence I have had with Mr. Wilson, Director of the Government Schools of Design at Somerset House, on this subject, he says:—

“With regard to a Gallery of Art at Manchester, I firmly believe that there is no project which can be entertained which can possibly be more advantageous.”

He then proceeds to a description of what the Gallery ought to consist of:—

“A Gallery of Casts should be formed, both of the Figure and of Ornament; but, taking advantage of the experience gained in other places, a plan should be laid down at first, and Casts should not be purchased here and there, merely because made from fine statues, but Chronology should be thought of, and the collection should commence with a few illustrations of Egyptian Art, next early Greek, then the Art of Phidias, then the later Greek Sculptors, and lastly, Greek Roman. You might then commence middle-age Art, and lastly, give Casts from the works of our own best Artists, and a few of the best German, Italian, and French, not forgetting the Dane.

“To form such a collection, so small a sum is required, that your wealthy town could easily furnish; and once in earnest, I doubt not but that you would be presented with the Elgin Casts.

“Your collection of Architectural Casts should be equally ample, especially as the cost is so trifling. The *French* Government has moulds of all the best works of the best ages of Art. You might attach to this museum entertaining specimens of your own manufactures from the earliest times, and you might invite people to present gifts of Carving, Metal Casting, &c. &c., so as to form a middle-age museum, which would be of infinite service to Industrial Art—to all Art, in fact.”

The effect of such exhibitions on the public taste is not the only important result that would arise from them. It is not merely as it regards their influence on Art that I would advocate their establishment; I would also plead for them on account of the moral effects they would produce amongst the mass of the people. I think it will be readily admitted, that if such places of resort were opened and frequented by them, they could not fail to elevate their notions and purify their actions. At present we are deficient in those means of instruction which are adapted to the wants of the *up-grown* man. The institutions that exist are either above his means, or too elementary in their character, for him to find his enjoyment in them. I have long thought this an essential defect in all schemes that have been proposed to allure his attention. They propose to him to give up his present habits, but offer nothing in exchange; at least not that which is suited to his inclinations, his judgment, or his age. If we investigate character, we find *few* that have arrived at the age of maturity, that like to acknowledge or that feel their ignorance, and there is a disinclination to resort to the first elements of knowledge as a means of instruction. Age has begotten its conceits and accumulated prejudices, and there is an aversion to adopt any course which they conceive will increase their labour; they think that after their daily labour is performed, the time is their own. There is some point in which they fancy they excel others,—on which they hinge their fame; this is enough to beget in their minds a prejudice to abstract learning, and keeps them aloof from those excellent institutions that have been originated for their benefit. How, then, are you to teach them their ignorance, or induce them to come within the meshes of those nets you spread to win them to their good? Again, we have at present no place of resort or means of instruction which does not require the separation of the man from his family: there is little that is done in them that allows of their assembling together; and I cannot

but look on any means originated with the intention of elevating the character of the working classes, that does not include the moral elevation of *both sexes*, as well as all ages, as defective in their plan. From this hasty sketch, I think it will be evident that the means of instruction that I am advocating, will not only remedy many of the defects attached to those institutions that exist for the promotion of the welfare of the working classes, but be the means of placing their importance in that powerful light before their minds, that they will be led to desire to realize the advantages arising from them, not only for themselves, but their families. It does appear to me, that the most powerful means of teaching these people their true state, will be through the *eye*,—by setting before them, and giving them constant access to, emporiums where the beauties of Nature, Art, and Science are open to their study,—where they may see the splendour and perfection of the first, the imperfect yet noble attempt of the other to reach it, and the state of those productions in which they have a personal interest.

In one of the papers (*The Spectator*) the following remarks were made in reference to the Soirée lately held by the Athenæum:—

“No good is done by endeavouring to trap the disciple into a course of school learning under the name of play; he will discover the cheat, and your school will be deserted. But give him real amusement, choosing it of the kind to exercise intellectual faculties cultivated in another nursery,—to appeal to the sense of the beautiful in nature,—to awaken that preference for what is good instead of bad, and you extend the sway of intellectual morality over a wide domain. It is subjecting the ‘lower orders’—the ‘common people’—to the rule of good taste. You could scarcely have a more vigilant and efficient police. Once establish such an authority, and far more than half the vices of large towns—the abuses

against sanatory laws, the very dangers of popular turbulence—would cease.”

It is these nurseries we want, in which, *though not young*, the unexpanded minds of the working classes may find those alluring pictures which will excite a spirit of enquiry,—where they will have a lesson taught by things which, though silent, will be powerful instructors,—teachers that require no confession,—which will not expose the condition of the pupils, but still impress upon their minds that truth which will not fail to work its effects and urge them to attempt improvement, if not to aim at excellence.

That such means of improving their condition would be appreciated by the working classes, I think has been fully demonstrated by the Exhibitions that have been held at the Mechanics’ Institution in this town. You will allow me to state the results. In the year 1837 the first was held; the receipts were for five weeks £1078., which gives 43,120 visitors,—upwards of 8,600 sixpences per week;—1838, in fourteen weeks, £2,332., 93,280 visitors,—more than 6,660 per week. At Easter,* in 1840, (ten weeks,) £838., 35,320 visitors,—more than 3,500 visitors per week; and there were admitted this year 3,073 persons belonging to the various charities of the town. In 1842, (seventeen weeks,) £2,583., 103,320 visitors,—more than 6,000 per week; and 3,414 persons belonging to the charities. These calculations do not include the visits of the members, or those who had the right of *entrée* as contributors. I have been told that the party who exhibited the Raffaele tapestries in this building received a far greater amount during the Whit week, at sixpence each, than he had done at any previous time at one shilling; and I believe the results of the

* I would direct attention to this,—that the exhibition held at this season of the year was the least productive of the whole, shewing that there was an appreciation on the part of the people of the beauties of nature, and that they availed themselves of the opportunities the season afforded for out-door recreation and enjoyment. The other Exhibitions were at Christmas.

late Exhibition of Pictures here illustrated this feeling in a powerful manner, and that during the three hours it was open in the evening, at the end of the season,—when the novelty had ceased,—the receipts at *sixpence* exceeded the average daily receipts at one shilling. Those who watched the effect produced amongst the working classes, who came in the evening to the Exhibition lately held in our own schools, could not but be satisfied that some such means for instructing them was highly important. Mr. Foggo, the honorary secretary to the society for opening the public monuments of the country, says, in a letter I have from him on this subject, that the endeavours of that society have been ably seconded by the conduct of the working classes. In a report of the society for obtaining free admission to national monuments, &c., I find the following statements of the increase of visitors :

	1839.	1842.
British Museum	280,850 ...	547,768
National Gallery	466,650 ...	540,315
Tower of London.....	72,000 ...	107,368

At the latter place, in 1838, the admission fee was three shillings; the amount received £1,665. : in 1839 it was reduced to one shilling, and the amount increased to £2,110. : the following year it was reduced to sixpence, and the amount increased to £2,380. This was limited, owing to the regulations of the Tower not allowing more than 100 persons to be in at one time. At Hampton Court Palace, in 1838, a discretionary fee was expected, and 50,000 persons visited it : in the year 1842, when it was free, 175,000 enjoyed the privilege of viewing and studying its valuable contents. But I will not enlarge on this point, as I think experiments have been tried which have removed all doubts as to the moral effects of such places of resort, and that no doubt can remain that they would be appreciated and frequented by the working classes.

The age in which we live is one that will stand boldly

forward on the page of history. At no former period has there been such efforts made, or means contemplated, for the elevation of the national character by the diffusion of knowledge. We may well be proud that, whilst propositions are made and carried into effect in other places, this town has taken the foremost rank in everything that tends to promote, not only the education and comfort, but the rational amusement of its inhabitants! The amount of the subscription—the hearty good-will that has been manifested by all parties—and particularly the amount of money received from the working classes, in support of the proposition to establish public parks, is, indeed, and will long be a just boast and honour to the town! The intention cannot be questioned; or that, at one season of the year, there could be a greater boon bestowed on the inhabitants than the means of out-door recreation and exercise; and it is with diffidence that I would suggest that the time of their utility will be limited, and propose that means should be adopted to fill up the recess that will naturally occur in the Winter season, when the weather will prevent their being made use of for the purpose of recreation or pleasure. Let this season, when shelter is desirable, be devoted to those objects of recreation which will instruct whilst they gratify. Let us have a Winter Park! which, when the beauties of nature have deserted us for a season, and she offers no allurements, will open to our vision fields of beauty, which, if they reach not her perfections in form and colour, will yet impart those pleasures which will make us, with returning Spring, rejoice, that by their study and contemplation, we are rendered more capable of enjoying its opening splendours—its gay and beautiful productions. Let us have a Museum of Art and Nature, whose ample stores will educate the public eye—enable it to detect and appreciate beauty!—where, by contrast, we may elevate and purify our knowledge, and, from the works of other ages and other climes, learn our own standard at the present day.

The plan that I would suggest is, that a respectful but earnest memorial be presented to Her Majesty, setting forth the commercial importance, and the dependance of the manufactures of this district upon a right understanding and application of the principles of Art,—the deficiency that exists of any means of acquiring this knowledge,—and the influence that such means of instruction could not fail to have on the welfare of all classes, together with the moral effects that would be likely to follow the adoption of such a course ; and praying Her, that she be pleased to order that the competent authorities may be put in possession of the duplicates of every department, and a set of casts, from the examples in the British Museum, for the purpose of public exhibition here. Then should we be enabled, not only to elevate the public taste—improve the productions of Industrial Art, but found a School, which I would fain hope would not fail to develope that talent, and call into exercise that genius, which would not only elevate the national character, but reflect the brightest rays of honour on the town of Manchester.

62, UPPER NORTON STREET, PORTLAND ROAD,
London, Nov. 11th, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have long considered Manchester, Liverpool, and the neighbourhood, peculiarly calculated to rival the metropolis in the promotion of the fine arts. Commerce and manufactures, which naturally imply wealth, intelligence, and industry, always have been the greatest promoters of those arts, when allowed to apply their energies to the purpose, and surely Manchester alone has more means than either Athens, Florence, or Pisa ever had. If you can persuade its inhabitants of this truth, and instil into their hearts the noble ambition of excelling in all that is intellectual, moral, and beautiful, you will accomplish more good than the boasted Louis XIV. did. Newcastle-on-Tyne is, on a small scale, a fine example of what may be done for the improvement of a once vulgar and degraded population. The late Mr. Roscoe showed what might be done at Liverpool; but Manchester has capabilities far greater than either. I know but one impediment, that must be got rid of; I mean the dense smoke that obscures and spoils everything, and disguises nature as well as works of art. To display taste in emulation of Rome, Paris, or London, within such an atmosphere, is hopeless; but the remedy is no longer distant. The various furnaces contrived for the purpose ought to be adopted, and where there is peculiar difficulty, the precaution of roasting (thoroughly drying) the coal may suffice. By this simple mode, Mr. Childe, the distiller in the borough, has reduced the smoke of his great chimney to the average of a common parlour fire; otherwise he would have suffered an immense loss by the cancelling of his lease. (Necessity is the mother of invention.)

The good will, and where it can be done, the exertions of the society for obtaining Free Admission to National Monuments, may in your case, as in all exhibitions for the improvement of the people, be relied on. It has done a vast deal of good, more by exciting a generous feeling in those who are well off, and by proving that the working classes deserve and appreciate exhibitions and intellectual recreation, than by its outlay or direct interference. Applications to government, to the directors of public, and sometimes of private institutions; communications amongst them of each other's operations; and occasionally discussions in parliament, have made the principle familiar and agreeable to all parties, and the good behaviour of poor visitors to public places has admirably supported us. As to the British Museum, the mode of obtaining casts from its collection (now probably the finest, as it is the most varied and interesting in the world) has been reduced to a system that we consider unobjectionable. If you required a cast from an object not yet moulded, Mr. Hawkins, the keeper of the antiquities, would estimate how many casts they would be likely to dispose of, and dividing the aggregate amount of the whole

expenses, the price would be fixed accordingly,—the same to you as to those who might come after.

A selection of those antiquities,—some from the Townley, some from the Elgin marbles,—others from the peculiar but beautiful specimens brought from Caria by Mr. Charles Fellowes, and varieties even from the Egyptian and Etruscan, &c., if well and fairly selected, would constitute an interesting gallery of ancient art; but to complete it as such, the Laocoon, the Gladiators, the Venus de Medicis, the Lizard Appolloard, the Belvidere, a specimen or two of the Niobes, &c. &c., must be added: nor should some of the magnificent ornaments be forgot. Still I should not be satisfied with these. Schools have too long directed our attention to the antique without respect to our circumstances. Such a collection should be competent to *extend*, and not *contract*, the varied ideas of a numerous population;—it should give to genius ample room for its boldest flights, and lead the way to more extensive, to boundless regions of light and glory. To see the antique, must excite our ambition, perhaps purify our taste; but to imitate that which we only half understand, and can never equal,—since that which was natural and proper with them is necessarily conventional to us,—is to condemn us to positive inferiority. The style of art among us ought to be moulded on the feelings and habits of the age and country. To do otherwise, is to speak to our countrymen with a Grecian or Roman accent. No doubt, in appealing to their sense and sensibilities, it behoves us to render our vernacular expressions both pure and forcible, in order to assist in the improving their taste. I should, therefore, extend the opportunities of comparison by casts from Michael Angelo, John de Bologno, Cellini, and a few French sculptors, and certainly some by our own best artists—Bacon, Banks, Flaxman, Chantrey, Woodington, Behnes, Bailey, Bell, Park, Foley, &c. &c.; and as a standard whence all art must be estimated, between the divisions I would place a fine cast from nature.

I am inclined to think that statues, bas reliefs, and ornamental castings, cartoons, drawings, and prints, would be better than paintings, if the object is to improve taste for the higher qualities of art. At the exhibition of cartoons last year, at Westminster Hall, all were delighted with the subjects, actions, and expressions, and very few cared for, or even thought of, the absence of colour.

Your desire, and a very judicious one, of making a museum a substitute for parks, in bad weather, reminds me that it should be lighted accordingly,—fit for dull days. Having had some very successful experience, I shall be happy to explain particulars on that point.

In all our proceedings, we must not forget that the improvement of taste is to be subservient to still higher results.

I remain, very sincerely, yours,

GEO. FOGGO.

To Geo. Jackson, Esq., &c.

Cave and Sever, Printers, 18, St. Ann's-street, Manchester.

~~16 Oct 2~~